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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 AMMAN 001843

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: TFI201: THAI AMBASSADOR TO IRAQ PROVIDES MORE INFORMATION ON SITUATION IN BAGHDAD

REF: AMMAN 1581

Classified By: Ambassador Edward W. Gnehm. Reasons 1.5 (b,d).

11. (S) On March 26, Thai Ambassador to Iraq (also accredited to Jordan) Tawatchai Piyarat (please protect) invited A/DCM and A/Pol to his temporary Amman residence to discuss ongoing events in Iraq. Piyarat said that he was speaking in a personal capacity and not on instructions from Bangkok, and was motivated to provide any help he could "to end the war quickly and end the suffering of the Iraqi people." (Note: Piyarat had earlier provided us the information contained reftel.)

12. (S) Piyarat began by noting that the Iraqis are "tough, smart, and will fight you with all they've got." He noted that before he departed Baghdad on 3/11, he saw Baath party officials distributing weapons to party members and other Saddam loyalists. Such tenacity notwithstanding, he offered the following observations to help coalition military personnel define targets:

-- Every Mukhabarat building has a pole with red and white stripes. He noted that care must be taken as many of these buildings are co-located in residential areas (the Mukhabarat's HQ -- long since relocated to a building near the UNDP HQ -- is only 30 meters from the official Thai residence.)

-- Iraqi Generals and senior officials drive white Mercedes 320S sedans. Government vehicles have blue license plates, however GOI officials drive in regular white plated vehicles as well making identification difficult.

-- Many senior Iraqi officials have homes near the park by the Parade Grounds (where the large crossed swords monument is located). Most of these officials have moved out of their residences and have commandeered buildings along the river

-- There are many underground roadways in Baghdad. He says that Thai workers have told him of being blindfolded, put on a bus, and then arriving at an underground construction site where they would labor in six month rotations. He noted specifically that under the garden and "pool" of the palace beside Saddam tower is an underground roadway. Piyarat did not specify where the road went or what its use is but offered that "perhaps another 'bunker buster' can finish it off." (DAO Comment: This reporting is similar to reports of Chinese laborers working on underground facilities in the 1990s.)

-- In attacking Baghdad, the U.S. should consider attacking or gaining access to the city by using the river: "they expect you to come by land or by air, but not by water."

13. (S) Piyarat offered the following additional thoughts on a range of topics.

-- Iraq's strategy: Piyarat assessed that "they will lure you into Baghdad and then take down a lot of people with them."

-- WMD labs: He has no doubt they exist, but the Iraqis have been very smart in breaking down individual factories into very small units, each of which produces only a small part of the overall item.

-- The average Iraqi's psychological state: Among the younger people "they've created a generation of hatred, they hate America" but among older Iraqis a reservoir of good feelings about America still exists. "Its about 50/50." (DAO Comment: Past DAO reporting has indicated a similar generational divide in Iraq regarding attitudes toward the U.S.)

-- Radio/TV: Iraqis listen to Iranian radio and watch Iranian TV, both of which they can receive well in Baghdad. He suggested that the coalition should take out Iraqi TV as soon as possible. Saddam uses that to "create instant casualties" whenever he wants. Piyarat suggested that an area in the desert west of Baghdad would be a good place to locate radio or TV transmitters that could reach Baghdadis.

-- The Power of Giving: As a final observation, Piyarat commented on how much of Saddam's power derives from favors which he can provide or deny: "When Saddam gives, he's good."

When he doesn't give, he's bad. That's the way it is."

GNEHM